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無聲之聲（Ⅲ）：近代中國的婦女與文化（1600-1950）

（抽印本）

**“Unharnessed Fillies”:
Discourse on the “Modern”
Female Student in Early
Twentieth-Century China**

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中華民國 92 年 5 月
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“Unharnessed Fillies”: Discourse on the “Modern” Female Student in Early Twentieth-Century China

Paul J. Bailey*

In January 1915, on the eve of the New Culture Movement that was to launch an “iconoclastic” assault on Confucian tradition, a Shanghai teacher, Yu Tiansui 余天遂, wrote an article on women’s education for the first issue of *Funü zazhi* 婦女雜誌 (The Ladies Journal).¹ Arguing that advocates of women’s rights in China had gone too far, he insisted that female students should aspire to roles befitting their natural abilities and qualifications. Even in America, Yu continued, where women’s rights (*nüquan* 女權) were most prevalent, women took seriously their duties towards their husbands—encouraging, supporting and looking after them. Yet in recent times, Yu continued, “our calm-natured women (*wo xing jing qingyi zhi nüzi* 我性靜清

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¹ *Funü zazhi* 婦女雜誌 began publication in 1915 and ran until 1931. See J. Nivard, “Women and the Women’s Press: The Case of the *Ladies Journal*, 1915-1931”, *Republican China*, 10:1b (November 1984), pp. 37-55. Circulation of this journal, which was considerably higher than any other women’s journal of the time, increased from 3,000 to 10,000 after the May Fourth movement (these figures must be multiplied several times as any one issue would have been read by several people). See also Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 67-116 for an analysis of gender discourse in the *Funü zazhi*. For a useful study of the changes in urban women’s lives based on a reading of the *Funü zazhi*, see Zhou Xuqi 周敘琪, *1910-1920 niandai duhui xinfunü shenghuo fengmao* 1910-1920 年代都會新婦女生活風貌 [Changes in Urban Women’s Lifestyles from 1910 to 1920] (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chubun weiyuanhui, 1996).

逸之女子) in China" had been encouraged to engage in "anarchic" and fruitless competition with men. If female students were stirred up in this way, Yu lamented, they would become like "unharnessed fillies" (*fan jia zhi ma* 泛駕之馬) and would never return willingly to a more appropriate form of study geared to their innate talents (such as handicraft skills) and virtues (such as patience).²

The anxiety expressed in this article concerning the direction of women's education and the behavior of female students illuminates an aspect of gender discourse in China that is often overlooked in the meta-narrative of social and cultural change in the early twentieth century. Thus the establishment of private and public girls' schools from the 1890s on and the accompanying call for the emancipation of women and the granting of equal political, social and economic rights that climaxed during the May Fourth era (1915-1921) have been viewed either as a feature of the state-building process that sought to incorporate women as citizens in the quest for a strong and wealthy state or as an example of cultural radicalism that undermined traditional gender assumptions and practices. Throughout this period, however, many officials and educators promoted female education as a potentially effective means to reconfigure traditional virtues and skills in the cause of social harmony and national prosperity by training students as competent, diligent and suitably deferential household managers; at the same time, the response of female students themselves to the new educational opportunities provided for them during the last years of the Qing and early years of the Republic, and how this affected their behavior, aroused deep

² Yu Tiansui 余天遂, "Yu zhi nüzi jiaoyu guan" 余之女子教育觀 [My Views on Women's Education], *Funü zazhi*, 1:1 (January 1915), *lunshuo*, pp. 1-3. Reference to the "unbridled horse" metaphor occurred three years earlier in an article on women's political rights: it referred to critics who warned that if women were granted political rights they would become like "untrained horses that throw off all restraint once unbridled and are impossible to control again" See Chong 冲, "Nüquan yu guojia zhi guanxi" 女權與國家之關係 [The Relationship between Women's Rights and the State], *Shenzhou nübao* 神州女報 [Journal of Chinese Women], no.1 (1912), *lunshuo*, p. 11. Yu Tiansui's view was also echoed by another 1915 article published in a women's journal. Since women's natures were naturally empathetic, the article claimed, it was right that women provide help and support for their menfolk; it was therefore foolish to encourage women to "struggle" with men for equal rights. Liang Lingxian 梁令嫻, "Suo wang yu wuguo nüzi zhe" 所望於吾國女子者 [What I Expect from Our Country's Women], *Zhonghua funüjie* 中華婦女界 [Chinese Women's World], no.1 (1915).

alarm amongst both male and female educators.³

A recent study of gender discourse during the May Fourth era has highlighted the emergence of the female career woman as a new “social category” during this period;⁴ yet, in many ways, the female student can be described as an even more significant social phenomenon at this time. After all, the period from the late 1890s, when Chinese reformers established their own schools for girls (a small number of girls’ schools had been opened by western missionaries from the 1840s on), to the early years of the twentieth century, when local gentry elites and provincial officials began to sponsor the opening of literacy, vocational and normal schools for girls, was the first time girls and young women were educated in public (beyond the confines of the household in which, traditionally, girls from elite families received instruction from parents or private tutors).⁵ The Qing government itself, after initial reluctance, officially sanctioned the establishment of primary and lower normal schools for girls in 1907, while the new republican education system in 1912 provided for the creation of secondary schools for girls. In 1919 higher-level education for women was finally accepted when Beijing Women’s Higher Normal School was founded and women were allowed to enrol at Beijing University.

A tantalising public space was thus opened up for young women from the turn of the twentieth century and the highly visible female student was to become a frequent topic of discussion in the periodical press as well as in specialist women’s and educational journals (out of all proportion to the actual numbers of female students). Contemporary officials themselves were

³ On the debate over women’s education in the early twentieth century, see my chapter “Active Citizen or Efficient Housewife? The Debate Over Women’s Education in Early Twentieth Century China”, in G. Peterson, R. Hayhoe and Yongling Lu (eds), *Education, Culture and Identity in Twentieth Century China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 318-347.

⁴ Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 357. Elsewhere in the book, it is true, the author refers to the new social category of “female students” (pp. 13, 131), but the emphasis is very much on the May Fourth period rather than earlier.

⁵ A recent article has argued that the establishment of girls’ schools in the late Qing inaugurated a trend of “going public” in which women increasingly transgressed gender boundaries by leaving the household, interacting with men and acquiring new functions in society. Weikun Cheng, “Going Public Through Education: Female Reformers and Girls’ Schools in Late Qing Beijing”, *Late Imperial China*, 21:1 (June 2000), p. 108.

well aware of the novelty public education for girls presented. Thus one of the reasons Zhang Zhidong 張之洞(1837-1909), the Governor-General of Hunan and Hubei who helped draft regulations for a national school system in 1904, opposed making formal provision for the public education of girls was that it was inappropriate “to allow young girls to enter school in large groups and to wander about the streets.” Such a prospect, Zhang claimed, would contravene traditional practices of educating girls in the home and strictly segregating the sexes.⁶

In the period before the May Fourth movement the number of girls being publicly educated (in schools established by private individuals, local elites and district/provincial/central governments)⁷ rose steadily—although total numbers remained small in comparison with the numbers of boys enrolled in modern schools. Thus the number of girls in Chinese schools increased from 40 in 1903 to 20,557 in 1908 and 141,130 in 1912-1913.⁸

⁶ Zhang Zhidong 張之洞, et. al., *Zouding xuetang zhangcheng* 奏定學堂章程[Memorials Determining School Regulations] (1904; rpt Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan, 1972), pp. 492-493; Taga Akigorō 多賀秋五郎(comp.), *Kindai Chūgoku kyōiku shi shiryō* 近代中國教育資料[Materials on the History of Education in Modern China] (Tokyo: Nihon gakujutsu shinkokai, 1972), 1:311.

⁷ Schools in the early twentieth century were classified as private (*sili* 私立), public (*gongli* 公立) or official (*guanli* 官立). After 1912 the tripartite classification changed slightly to private, public and state (*guo*) schools.

⁸ Liao Xiuzhen 廖秀真, “Qingmo nūxue zai xuezhi shang de yanjin ji nūzi xiaoxue jiaoyu de fazhan (1897-1911) 清末女學在學制上的演進及女子小學教育的發展 (1897-1911)” [The Evolution of Women’s Education and the Development of Women’s Primary Education in the Late Qing], in Li Youning 李又寧 and Zhang Yufa 張玉法 (eds.), *Zhongguo jindai funüshi lunwenji* 中國近代婦女史論文集[Collection of Historical Essays on Chinese Women] (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1988), 2:226-227; I. Lewis, *The Education of Girls in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1919), p. 34. To these figures must be added the number of female students going abroad. Four missionary-sponsored women who went to the US to train as doctors in the 1880s and 1890s were the first to receive a higher education abroad. In 1911 there were a reported 50 female students in the US and by 1922 there were more than 200. The first Chinese women (eleven) to study in Japan went in 1903, and by 1903 there were an estimated 100 in Japan. Many of them studied at the Practical Arts School (*Jissen jogakkō* 實踐女学校) founded by Shimoda Utako 下田歌子 (1854-1936) in 1899. More than 200 Chinese women had been trained there by 1914. See the article by Joan Judge in this volume; also Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China’s Name* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 114-130; P. Harrell,

Most were enrolled at primary level; in 1915 the number of girls in higher and lower primary schools was 161,839 (in the same year, however, there were reportedly 3,713,454 boys at primary school).⁹ By 1922-1923 the total number of female students at all levels was 417,820.¹⁰ To these figures must be added those enrolled in missionary institutions. The first missionary school for girls was opened in 1844 (in Ningbo); by 1902 there were a

Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers 1895-1905 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 73; D. Reynolds, *China 1898-1912: The Xincheng Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 59.

⁹ Jiaoyubu 教育部(comp.), *Zhonghua minguo disanci jiaoyu tongji tubiao* 中華民國第三次教育統計圖表[The Third Set of Educational Statistics of the Republic of China] (Beijing, 1915), *Gesheng xuewu tongji zongbiao* 各省學務統計總表, p. 19. Of course, these numbers are small when compared to the number of boys in higher and lower primary school, which totalled 3,713,454 in 1915. By 1918-1919 there were 215,656 girls in primary school compared to 5,599,412 boys. Yu Qingtang 俞慶棠, "Sanshiwu nianlai Zhongguo zhi nüzi jiaoyu" 三十五年來中國之女子教育[Women's Education in the Last Thirty-Five Years], in Zhuang Yu 莊俞(ed.), *Zuijin sanshiwunian zhi Zhongguo jiaoyu* 最近三十五年之中國教育[Chinese Education in the Last Thirty-Five Years] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1931), p. 182; Liu Jucai 劉巨才, *Zhongguo jindai funü yundong shi* 中國近代婦女運動史[A History of the Modern Chinese Women's Movement] (Liaoning: Zhongguo funü chubanshe, 1989), p. 392.

¹⁰ Zhonghua jiaoyu gaijin she 中華教育改進社(comp.), *Zhongguo jiaoyu tongji gailan* 中國教育統計概覽[General Overview of China's Educational Statistics] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1923), p. 5. Of this total, 403,742 were in primary school. See Huang Yanpei 黃炎培, "Zhongguo ershiwu nianjian quanguo jiaoyu tongji de zongjiancha" 中國二十五年間全國教育統計的總檢查[General Survey of China's Educational Statistics in the Last Twenty-Five Years], *Renwen* 人文[The Humanities], 4:5 (15 June 1933), pp. 19-20. The number of girls in secondary school increased more slowly, from 10,066 in 1912 to 11,824 in 1922. *Zhonghua jiaoyu tongji gailan*, p. 53. In 1922 a total of 665 women were enrolled in higher education institutions (excluding missionary establishments) and by 1928-1929 the total had reached 1,485 (comprising 8.59% of the total attending higher education institutions). See Chen Chongguang 陳重光, *Minguo chuqi funü diwei de yanbian* 民國初期婦女地位的演變[Changes in the Status of Women in the Early Republic](Master's Thesis, Zhongguo wenhua xueyuan shixue yanjiu suo, Taipei, 1972), pp. 25, 30; Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhehui 中華全國婦女聯合會(comp.), *Zhongguo funü yundong shi* 中國婦女運動史[A History of the Chinese Women's Movement] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1989), pp. 95-96.

reported 4,373 female pupils in missionary schools.¹¹ In 1910 there were 16,190 girls in Protestant-run schools and in 1912 a total of 49,987 girls were attending Catholic-run schools.¹² The increasing visibility of the female student was enhanced by the fact that although the official regulations of 1907 sanctioning primary and normal school education for girls insisted on a strict segregation of the sexes, the lack of resources and facilities obliged many schools before 1912 (when co-education for primary schools was formally permitted) to accept both boys and girls.¹³ At the same time there were numerous school-related events (such as graduation ceremonies, exhibitions, and athletic meets) in which both male and female students participated.

The Promises and Threats of Women's Education

Right from the beginning educators and officials sought to create a controlled environment for girls' schools and prescribed how students should behave and dress. Thus one of the first private Chinese girls' schools—the Jingzheng nǚxue 經正女學 (Jingzheng Girls' School) founded in 1898 by Jing Yuanshan 經元善, the head of the Shanghai telegraph bureau—insisted that all administrators, teachers and servants within the school be female and that no men be allowed to enter the premises (male directors

¹¹ Lü Shipeng 呂士朋, "Xinhai qian shiyu nianjian nǚxue de chang-dao" 辛亥前十餘年間女學的倡導 [The Advocacy of Women's Education in the Decade Before the 1911 Revolution], in Bao Jialin 鮑家麟 (ed.), *Zhongguo funüshi lunji* 中國婦女史論集 [Historical Essays on Chinese Women] (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 1993), p. 255. This figure might be an underestimate since I. Lewis, *The Education of Girls in China* (pp. 24-25) gives a figure of 6,798 girls in Protestant schools in 1896.

¹² I. Lewis, *The Education of Girls in China*, pp. 24-25. Some studies seem to overlook Catholic schools. Thus J. Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) noting (p. 25) that by 1908 the number of girls in Chinese government schools exceeded the number of those in missionary schools, only provides figures for Protestant schools—16,910 in 1910 and 50,173 in 1916 (p. 273, n. 46).

¹³ Liao Xiuzhen, "Qingmo nǚxue zai xuezhi shang de yanjiu chi nǚzi xiaoxue jiaoyu de fazhan", pp. 238-239. M. Burton, *The Education of Women in China* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1911) cites figures indicating the existence of 297 "elementary schools" attended by both boys and girls (p. 129).

were to be consulted outside the school).¹⁴ In line with Jing Yuanshan's assumption that women's education should cultivate "kind and gentle" girls (*shu nü* 淑女) so that the country would have worthy mothers (*xianmu* 賢母) and thus worthy sons (*xianzi* 賢子),¹⁵ the school regulations specified that students had to come from "good families" and their conduct was to be closely monitored. Interestingly, the gender segregation of the school and the outside environment was matched by class segregation within the school; thus the school allowed boarding students to bring their own servants with them (to be placed under the control of school administrators), but it was made clear that they had to sleep in separate rooms. Another private girls' school in Shanghai—the Wuben nüxue 務本女學 (Wuben Girls' School) established in 1902—forbade students from wearing face powder and jewelry and insisted they wear simple cotton garments (white or light blue).¹⁶ The formal regulations for girls' primary and normal schools issued

¹⁴ The regulations for Jing Yuanshan's school are in Zhu Youhuan 朱有璘 (comp.), *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao* 中國近代學制史料 [Historical Materials on Modern China's Educational System] (Shanghai: Huadong daxue chubanshe, 1986), 1:2, 885-889. See also Liu Jucai, *Zhongguo jindai funü yundong shi*, pp. 124-125; Liao Xiuzhen, p. 220. The school was also known as the Zhongguo nüxuetang (Chinese Women's School 中國女學堂). Enrolment increased from 16 to 70 by 1899. Initially, the school allowed girls with bound feet to enrol on the understanding that within a few years no more students with bound feet would be accepted.

¹⁵ Jing Yuanshan 經元善, "Quan nüzi dushu shuo" 勸女子讀書說 [On Urging Women to Study] (1899), in Zhu Youhuan (comp.), *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao*, 1:2, 882.

¹⁶ Regulations for the Wuben Girls' School are in Zhu Youhuan (comp.), *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao* (Shanghai: Huadong daxue chubanshe, 1989), 2:2, 590-593. Another private, family-operated girls' school in Beijing—the Girls' School of Pleasant Instruction (Beijing Yujiao Nüxuetang 北京豫教女學堂) established in 1905—forbade students interrupting lectures, eating, drinking and moving around in class as well as spitting, writing graffiti and adopting modern fashions. The Girls' School of Interpreting Skills (Yiyi Nüxuetang 譯藝女學堂), founded in 1906, warned students to refrain from all political discussions and "unrestrained and foolish" (*yechun* 野蠢) conduct. Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao* 近代中國女權運動史料 (Source Materials on the Women's Rights Movement in Modern China) (Taipei: Chuanji wenxueshe, 1975), 2: 1098, 1103. The rules of a Beijing girls' school in 1907 insisted on plain uniforms, forbade short hair, and required students to have attendance cards to be stamped when they entered and left school so as to avoid "misdemeanours". *Dagong bao* 大公報 [L'Impartial], 15 March 1907.

by the Board of Education in 1907 likewise laid down precise rules for student behavior. Girls were not to come into contact with boys or to attend any meetings held by male students, were not allowed to leave the school premises without being accompanied, and were forbidden from discussing political affairs and radical ideas (such as free choice in marriage) that might undermine traditional morality. They were also instructed not to “bob” their hair (*xu'e duanfa* 蓄額短髮, lit. “to grow a fringe and cut the hair short”).¹⁷

In 1909 the Board of Education issued guidelines on school uniforms for female students.¹⁸ Arguing that all other countries had adopted uniform dress regulations for girls' schools, the Board of Education proposed that primary school students wear ordinary long gowns (*changshan* 長衫) that covered the knees and were made of native cotton; furthermore, such garments were to be dark blue (for winter and spring) or light blue (for summer and autumn). Adoption of western-style dress was expressly forbidden. Such uniformity, however, which was increasingly perceived as a crucial factor in creating a unified nation state, was never to be achieved, and the clothes, adornment and differing hairstyles of female students over subsequent years became a frequent topic of debate. In early 1911, for example, one concerned writer expressed alarm that there was no clear uniformity of appearance amongst female students, criticizing in particular the tendency for girls to wear trousers instead of skirts and elaborately braid their hair; he proposed that every girls' school establish a “dress reform association” to ensure that students wore skirts and divested themselves of superficial adornments (this included the smoking of western-style cigarettes).¹⁹

¹⁷ The 1907 regulations on girls' schools are in Shu Xincheng 舒新城(comp.), *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyushi ziliao* 中國近代教育史料[Materials on Modern Chinese Educational History] (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1962), 3:800-819, and in Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 2:974-989. See also Liao Xiuzhen, pp. 210-213.

¹⁸ “Xuebu zou zun'ni nüxue fuse zhangcheng zhe” 學部奏遵擬女學服色章程摺 [Memorial sent by the Board of Education concerning draft regulations on school dress for girls], printed in Li Yuning and Chang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 2: 991-992.

¹⁹ “Nüxiao yi tichang gailiang fushi yi” 女校宜提倡改良服飾議 [Girls' Schools Should Reform Dress and Adornment], *Dagong bao*, 17, 18, 19 February 1911.

The various rationales for women's education provided by reformers and government officials after the 1890s shared common themes. For Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (1842-1923), one of the first reformers to advocate women's education in the early 1890s, the aim was to train "worthy women, worthy wives and worthy mothers" (*xiannü* 賢女, *xianqi* 賢妻, *xianmu* 賢母) so as to make them more capable in running the household and thus relieve husbands of undue anxiety. Attributing social and moral malaise to the "backwardness" of women, Zheng claimed that an education that divested them of their idleness and superstitions by making them morally upright, numerate and skilled in handicrafts would provide the required "assistance from within the household" (*neizhu* 內助).²⁰ Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), another pioneering advocate of women's education, stressed its importance for the national well-being. In an 1897 article Liang especially highlighted two benefits: first, educated women would be morally, intellectually and physically equipped to bear fitter sons and oversee their upbringing as future patriotic citizens of the country, and, second, educational opportunities would enable women to become more economically productive so that they would cease to be parasitic consumers, lighten the burden of responsibility placed upon men, and revive the country's economic fortunes.²¹ Much of the periodical press during the last years of the Qing (including journals published by overseas Chinese students in Japan) likewise urged the implementation of women's education to train "the mothers of the nation" (*guomin zhi mu* 國民之母).²²

In its preamble to the 1907 regulations sanctioning primary and normal school education for women, the Board of Education (*xuebu* 學部) insisted that it consolidate traditional "women's morality" (*nüde* 女德) by inculcating virtues of steadfast chastity (*zhenjing* 正經), obedience (*shunliang* 順良), compassion (*cishu* 慈淑) and proper conduct (*duanqian* 端謙). Echoing the reformist discourse, the Board of Education confidently predicted that such

²⁰ Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應, "Nüjiao" 女教 [On Women's Education], in *Zheng Guanying ji* 鄭觀應集 [Collected Works of Zheng Guanying] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 1: 287-290.

²¹ Liang Qichao 梁啟超, "Lun nüxue" 論女學 [On Women's Education], in Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 1: 549-556.

²² See, for example, Qing Ru 清如, "Lun nüxue" 論女學 [On Women's Education], *Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi* 中國新女界雜誌 [New World of Chinese Women], no. 2 (1907).

virtues would enable girls in the future to “assist their husbands” (*xiangfu* 相夫) and “train their sons” (*xunzi* 訓子).²³ The phrase *xiangfu jiaozi* 相夫教子 (assisting husbands and instructing sons) appears frequently in reformist proposals for women’s education. Thus Liang Qichao’s 1897 proposal began with the assertion that “education for women will enable them to assist husbands on the one hand and instruct sons on the other” (*shang ke xiangfu xia ke jiaozi* 上可相夫，下可教子), while Kang Tongwei 康同薇 (daughter of Kang Youwei), in proclaiming the necessity for women’s education in 1898, argued that China needed “worthy mothers to instruct their sons and capable wives to assist their husbands” (*xianmu jiao qi zi, shuqi xiang qi fu* 賢母教其子，淑妻相其夫).²⁴

It is interesting to note that advocacy of women’s education during the last years of the Qing occurred precisely at the time officials and educators in Japan were redefining women’s roles as part of the Meiji state’s nation-building and industrialization project, and at a time (especially after 1902) when Chinese educators and reformers were increasingly exposed to Japanese educational thought and practice via overseas study in Japan, translations of Japanese educational texts and the employment of Japanese teachers and educational advisers in China. From the 1890s on, the Meiji state attempted to impose on women a uniform gender ideology, encapsulated by the traditionalist-sounding slogan of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife and worthy mother, Chinese *liangqi xianmu* 良妻賢母), that exalted the virtues of frugality and productivity. With the home now perceived in state discourse as a public space, women were expected to contribute to national

²³ The regulations also insisted on the use of separate textbooks and curricula for boys and girls’ schools so as to avoid “abuses and malpractices” (*biduan* 弊端). Instruction in girls’ primary schools was to be limited to practical literacy, arithmetic and “women’s work” (*nügong* 女工). Liao Xiuzhen, p. 210.

²⁴ Liang Qichao, “Chang she nüxuetang qi” 倡設女學堂啓 [Announcement on the Proposed Establishment of the Chinese Women’s School], in Shu Xincheng (comp.), *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyushi ziliao*, 3: 797. Liang’s statement continued: “.....in the short term (women’s education) will benefit the household, and in the long term will benefit the race.” Kang Tongwei, “Nüxue libi shuo” 女學利弊說 [On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Women’s Education], in Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 1: 564. Jing Yuanshan, in an 1899 article on women’s education, also used the phrase *xiangfu jiaozi* 相夫教子. This, according to Jing, was part of women’s role in “managing the interior” (*zhinei* 治內). Zhu Youhuan (comp.), *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao*, 1: 2, 882.

prosperity and stability through efficient running of the household, care of the old and infirm, and responsible and competent upbringing of children (as well as through their financial earnings).²⁵

Such assumptions clearly underpinned much of the Chinese discourse, although the actual phrase *ryōsai kenbo* was not specifically used in either the proposals of the 1890s or the Board of Education's 1907 regulations.²⁶ The ideal may have been heartily condemned by one contributor to a Chinese women's journal in 1909, referring to it as a ploy to train "high class slaves for men",²⁷ but the fact remains that commentators after the 1890s generally linked women's education to a wider cause — be it household stability and harmony, national economic prosperity, or the health and knowledge of future male citizens. Furthermore, all expected female students to behave in a "responsible" way: exhibiting modesty, diligence and

²⁵ On gender discourse in Meiji Japan, see S. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 11-13, 22-23, 50-60, 107, 111-113; and S. Nolte and S. Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women 1890-1910", in G. Lee Bernstein (ed.), *Recreating Japanese Women 1600-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 151-174. Note, however, that although the Japanese Education Ministry issued guidelines in 1900 on the appropriate training for each gender (e.g., girls were to be educated in "feminine modesty" (*teishoku*), there was no special emphasis on the importance of motherhood at this time, a subject that was to become a topic of debate amongst feminist activists in the 1920s. The increasing importance of domestic management and the *ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母 ideal in Japanese women's education after the 1890s is also explored in B. Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Significantly, Japanese female educators such as Tsuda Umeko had studied in the US, where the "cult of domesticity" during the nineteenth century had resulted in a growing emphasis on domestic science in the curriculum for girls' schools.

²⁶ The phrase *xianmu liangqi* 賢母良妻 (reversing the order in Japanese) was specifically used for the first time in a Japanese-founded journal, *Shuntian shibao* 順天時報 [Shuntian Daily], in 1906. Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan shiliao*, 1: 623. Another article in the same year referred to *xiannü*, *xianfu*, *xianmu*. Ibid., 1: 621. The Board of Education in 1906 simply insisted on the training of "virtuous mothers" (*xianmu*). Liao Xiuzhen, p. 211. The phrase *xianqi liangmu* 賢妻良母 was not used in the regulations for Liang Qichao's school in Shanghai (1897) or for the Wuben Girls' School (1901), although Liao Xiuzhen asserts (p. 220) that both schools taught in accordance with the *xianqi liangmu* ideal.

²⁷ Cited in Liu Jucai, *Zhongguo jindai funü yundong shi*, p. 218.

commitment to improving their future household skills. Tianjin notables, for example, who opened a girls' school in 1903 insisted that students be taught how to practice the "womanly way" (*fudao* 婦道) and the skills necessary to facilitate their management of the household,²⁸ while another advocate of female education in the same year, after having noted—rather paradoxically—that girls in the West were educated to become doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs and journalists, went on to add that they all later achieved success in managing the household, raising children and supporting their menfolk; women needed to be educated, he concluded, in order to run the household, receive guests and write letters.²⁹

School readers for girls, which began to appear several years before the Qing government's formal sanction of women's public education in 1907, reinforced the idea that women's principal role was to manage the household effectively and thereby ensure family harmony and prosperity, considered an indispensable feature of a girl's potential future talents.³⁰ Not for the first time, however, such readers presented their audience with a variety of competing images and messages. In one 1906 reader, for example, portrayals of dutiful and diligent girls sweeping and cleaning the family home were juxtaposed with illustrations of more outgoing and hardy girls lifting weights or riding bicycles.³¹ A 1908 teaching manual for girls' primary schools insisted that women should take pleasure from being obedient to parents and future husbands and presented lessons on how to arrange household furniture and maintain a hygienic environment, while other lessons claimed that a patriotic commitment to national dignity was more

²⁸ "Tianjin shiban nǚxue zhangcheng" 天津試辦女學章程 [Regulations Concerning a Pilot Scheme for a Girls' School in Tianjin], *Dagong bao*, 28 May 1903.

²⁹ "Nǚzi yiwu" 女子義務 [Women's Duties], *Dagong bao*, 1 July 1903.

³⁰ Fang Liusheng 方潤生 (comp.), *Nǚzi guowen duben* 女子國文讀本 [Chinese Reader for Girls] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1905), Lesson 27: 6b-7a; Lesson 41: 10b. Earlier in the text, however (Lesson 7: 2a), girls were called upon in the future to exercise the same patriotic duty as boys in becoming acquainted with national affairs and working to protect the country. Intriguingly, in contrast to formal prescriptions (in school regulations) against mixing of the sexes, another lesson noted that girls at school need not limit themselves to other girls as friends; they could also make friends with "educated boys". Lesson 13: 3b.

³¹ Xu Jiaying 許家惺 (comp.), *Zuijin nǚzi xiushen jiaokeshu* 最近女子修身教科書 [Latest Ethics Textbook for Girls] (Shanghai: chunxueshe, 1906), 4b, 9b, 10b.

important than being married.³² Early readers and teaching manuals also condemned adornment (*zhuangshi* 裝飾) of all kinds, including the wearing of earrings and face powder,³³ and stressed the importance of punctuality and obeying rules—a 1906 reader, for example, portrayed schoolgirls dutifully listening to the school principal reading out school regulations and lining up in orderly way to enter school at the appointed time³⁴ (see figs. 1 and 2).

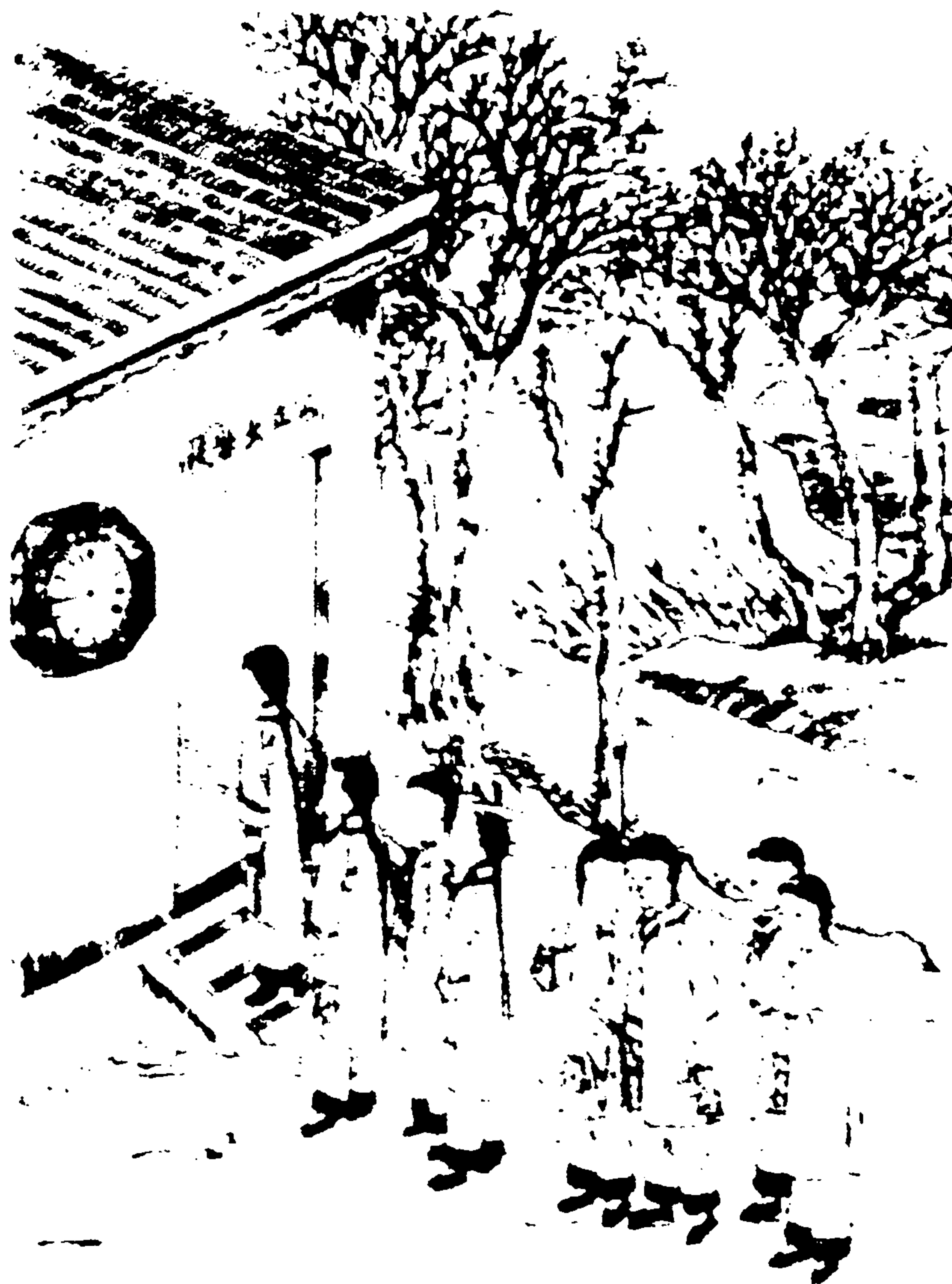


Figure 1: Lesson 18 “Keeping Time”. Girls must keep good time in attending school.

³² *Chudeng xiaoxue nüzi guowen jiaoshouben* 初等小學女子國文教授本 [Teaching Manual for Girls' Lower Primary Schools] (Shanghai: Zhongguo tushu gongsi, 1908). Lesson 21: 42-43; Lesson 29: 58-60; Lesson 32: 65-67; Lesson 33: 67-68.

³³ *Ibid.*, Lesson 15: 30-32; Lesson 25: 50-51. Lessons also drew attention to “bad customs” of hairstyling and doing up the hair (*shufa*), insisting that girls should cut their hair short (*lifa*). Hairstyles amongst girls and women, however, were to remain a heated topic of debate throughout this period.

³⁴ Xu Jiaying (comp.) *Zuijin nüzi xiushen jiaokeshu*, Lesson 18: 13a-b; Lesson 28: 21a-b.

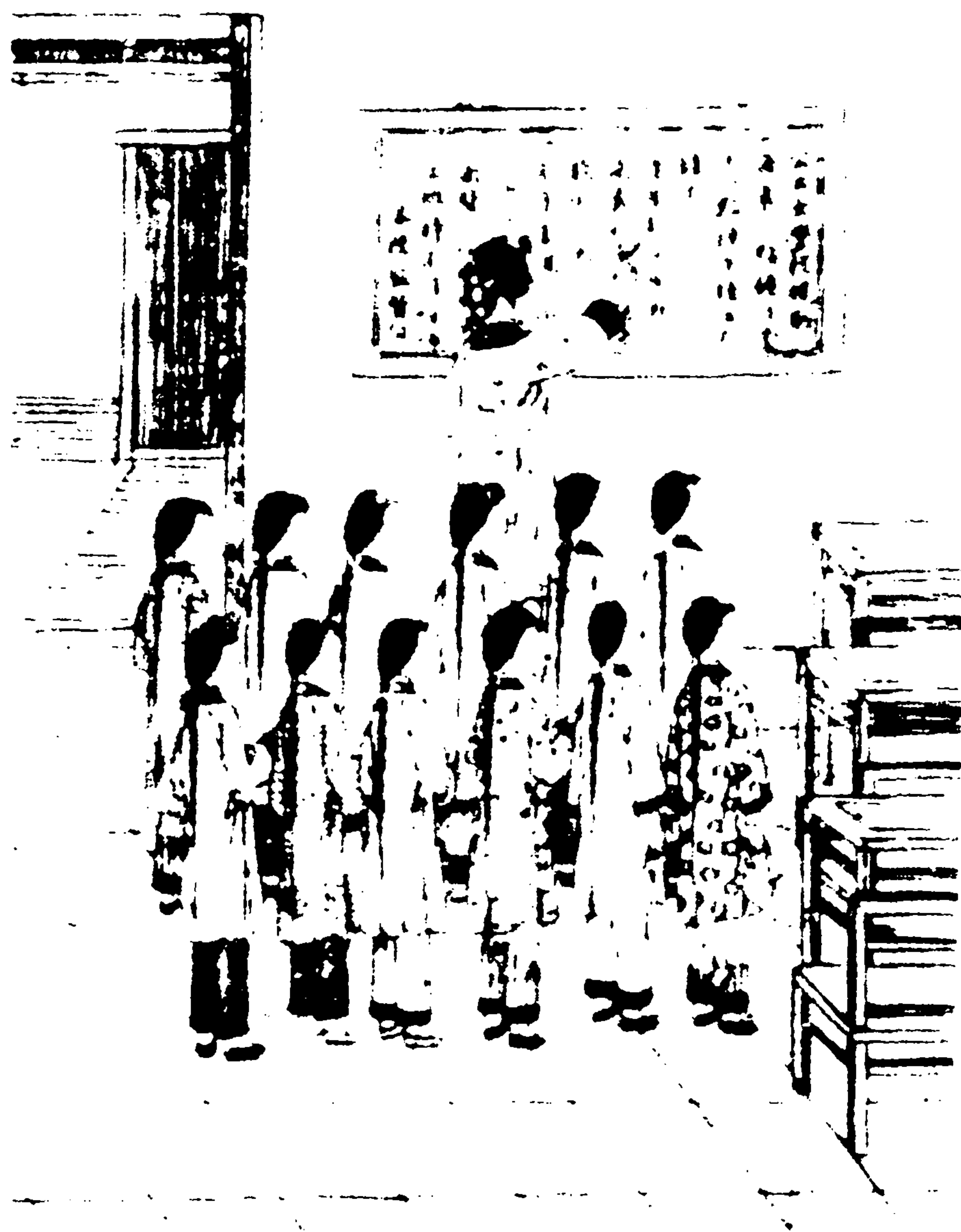


Figure 2: Lesson 28 “Obeying Regulations”

SOURCE: Xu Jiaying 許家惺(comp.), *Zuijin nüzi xiushen jiaokeshu* 最近女子修身教科書(Shanghai, 1906), 13a-b, 21a-b.

Despite all these school regulations and prescriptions for student behavior, it is clear that right from the start the unfolding reality of women's education aroused considerable disquiet amongst many educators and officials, a disquiet that was to become even more evident after 1911. Some believed that girls would use new educational opportunities for undesirable ends. A commentator in Liang Qichao's reformist journal *Xinmin Congbao* 新民叢報[New People's Miscellany] warned in 1904 that if girls were provided with too much of an advanced education they would look down on their male counterparts and even rebel against their destiny of becoming mothers,³⁵ a prospect that another writer in 1911 found had come

³⁵ “Nüzi Jiaoyu mudi lun” 女子教育目的論[On the Aims of Women's Education],

to fruition when he complained that women were using the opportunity to gain an education to break their ties with their families and lead independent lives.³⁶ A series of articles in 1911-1912 on girls' schools by a Shanghai schoolteacher claimed that since the promotion of women's education girls had adopted an elevated view of themselves, refusing to take seriously instruction in their "natural duties" (cooking, embroidery, household management); he also referred to the difficulty of "controlling" female students, especially the poorer ones.³⁷

Girls' schools were also perceived by some as sites of potential moral and social anarchy. In Guangzhou educational authorities in 1907 expressed alarm that women and girls from the "lower classes" (*xialiu funü* 下流婦女) were infiltrating schools as teachers and students and that this had led to a breakdown in discipline.³⁸ An article in a women's journal in 1904 even implied that girls' schools in the future might be indirectly responsible for encouraging promiscuity when it wondered whether "girls of dubious character" (*fei anfen nüzi* 非安份女子) might not use the pretext of leaving home to attend school in order to "indulge in their illicit sexual desires" (*jianlizhi si* 姦利之私).³⁹ It was also reported in 1909 that many students at

Xinmin congbao (New People's Miscellany), 13: 67 (1904), *jiaoyu*, pp. 1-19.

³⁶ Qian Zhixiu, "Nüzi zhiye wenti" 女子職業問題 [The Question of Women's Professions], *Dongfang zazhi* [Eastern Miscellany], 8: 9 (1911), pp. 4-7. Missionaries likewise were wary of the potential consequences of women's education in encouraging students to aspire to roles other than that of virtuous wife and mother. Thus a report of the West China Conference in 1908 noted: "While we should be satisfied with nothing but the best and highest training for our girls, yet we must constantly bear in mind that we are training the future mothers of China, and that a large percentage of our pupils will sometime have homes of their own. For this reason we should carefully avoid appealing to any ambition that in any way deprecates the home". Cited in M. Burton, *The Education of Women in China*, pp. 199-200.

³⁷ Li Tinghan, "Pinmin jiaoyu tan" 貧民教育談 [A Discussion of Poor People's Education], *Jiaoyu zazhi* 教育雜誌 [Educational Review], 3: 8 (1911); 3: 9 (1911); 3: 10 (1912); 3: 11 (1912); 3: 12 (1912). Li was careful to point out, however, that his proposed curriculum for girls' schools would include the teaching of skills such as accountancy and design to enable students in the future to work in libraries, banks and photography thus becoming "talented people in society" (*shehui banshi zhi rencai*).

³⁸ Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 2: 1135.

³⁹ "Nüquan shuo" 女權說 [On Women's Rights], *Nüzi Shijie* 女子世界 [Women's World], no. 5 (1904), *sheshuo*, pp. 1-5.

a nonofficial school in Changsha were apparently local prostitutes who spent their free time “recklessly engaged in lewd activities” (*sixing yinluan* 肆行淫亂) and exerting a bad influence on the daughters of “good families”.⁴⁰ Such indirect and direct identification of women’s education with prostitution only confirmed in the minds of conservative critics that publicly visible, seemingly independent and sometimes garishly dressed prostitutes and female students were interchangeable (an assumption not dispelled by the fact that some girls’ schools allowed their students to sing or act in order to earn revenue for the school).⁴¹

Furthermore, despite the avowed intention of officials and educators that girls’ schools be kept free of the “contagion” of subversive ideas—a policy that the Beijing Education Bureau, for example, put into practice in 1907 when it insisted that the Wenming Book Company revise its recently published collection of songs for girls’ schools because they contained references to “free marriage” (*ziyou jiehun* 自由結婚)⁴² — there was little confidence that female students would be permanently immune to the influence of radical notions such as that of “free love” (meaning free choice of marriage partner).⁴³ In fact, during the last years of the Qing girls’

⁴⁰ Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 2: 1195.

⁴¹ Liu Jucai, *Zhongguo jindai funü yundong shi*, p. 221. The singing ability of girls was also exploited by parents, according to one irate journal article in 1911. Gentry parents apparently compelled daughters to entertain guests by playing and singing music they had learned at school; the purpose of education, the article thundered, was to train citizens and not household slaves. “Lun xuetang jinzhi xuesheng yi suoxi yuege zuowei shehui chouying zhi zhu” 論學堂宜禁止學生以所習樂歌作為社會酬應之具 [Schools Must Stop Students from Using the Songs They Have Learned to be Used on Social Occasions], *Nüxuesheng Zazhi* 女學生雜誌 [Journal of Female Students], no. 2 (1911). It did not help either that there was much concern in the press at this time over the singing of “lewd” songs by female performers. See *Dagong bao*, 21 June 1903. One report also referred to the closing down of a factory in Tianjin after its female employees were heard to be singing songs with ‘promiscuous lyrics’ (*yinci* 淫詞). *Dagong bao*, 8 Feb. 1903, *zhongwai jishi*.

⁴² *Beijing nübao* 北京女報 [Beijing Women’s Daily], no. 581 (16 April 1907). See also *Dagong bao*, 8 April 1907, *shishi*; 19 April 1907, *shishi*.

⁴³ In 1909 the Board of Education instructed the Governor of Jiangxi to close down a public lecture association promoting free marriage that had been founded in the provincial capital by a number of returned female students. Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (comps.), *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao*, 2: 950.

schools became the site of a “counter-hegemonic” practice when free choice marriages (*wenming jiehun* 文明結婚, lit. “civilized marriages”) often took place on their premises. Thus in October 1910 a certain Ma Rensheng, a student at the Nankai Number One Middle School in Tianjin married a Ms. Zhang Zhuchun, a teacher at a local girls’ school; the premises of her school were “borrowed” for the simple ceremony, which comprised bows to selected guests and relatives followed by a tea party.⁴⁴

Finally, notwithstanding the regulations for nonofficial and official girls’ schools that prescribed strict gender segregation (i.e., girls not allowed to leave school unchaperoned, to mix with boys or attend outside activities and meetings at which male students were present), female students from the beginning were involved in a wide range of activities that considerably enhanced their public visibility. As early as 1903 an association for overseas study (*youxuehui* 遊學會) meeting in Tianjin included both male and female participants (with one female student making a speech insisting that it would be especially beneficial for the country if Chinese women studied abroad since they had superior intellects).⁴⁵ One girls’ school in Beijing celebrated Emperor Guangxu’s birthday in 1906 by staging group gymnastics and other athletic competitions for the local community.⁴⁶ Nearly thirty female students took part in a military-style parade in 1907 organized by male students in front of the Zhili governor’s yamen in Baoding.⁴⁷ An athletic meet in Hankou in 1908 comprised representatives from fifty boys’ schools and six girls’ schools.⁴⁸ School exhibitions of photographs, examination papers and calligraphy for the benefit of the public also brought female students out of the classroom.⁴⁹ Furthermore, girls’ schools became

⁴⁴ *Dagong bao*, 3 October 1910, *ben'an*. Female students from Beiyang Normal School and Beijing Higher School for Girls were also present at another “civilized marriage” of one of their teachers and a newspaper editor, and at which they played music and sang. *Dagong bao*, 17 October 1910, *ben'an*. After 1911 female students and teachers were increasingly associated with “civilized wedding ceremonies” (*wenming jiehun li*) See *Dagong bao*, 7 February 1913, *ben'an*.

⁴⁵ *Dagong bao*, 6 April 1903, *Zhongwai jishi*. The association proposed using the English title “Chinese Peripatetic Society”.

⁴⁶ Weikun Cheng, “Going Public Through Education”, p. 128.

⁴⁷ *Dagong bao*, 21 May 1907, *shishi*.

⁴⁸ M. Burton, *The Education of Women in China*, p. 188.

⁴⁹ Weikun Cheng, “Going Public Through Education”, p. 128.

involved in welfare relief and other national campaigns. In 1907 a number of girls' schools in Beijing organized fundraising events to aid flood victims in Jiangsu province, selling handicrafts and staging music and drama performances.⁵⁰ Female students organized anti-opium associations during the last years of the Qing and performed patriotic songs and speeches at meetings.⁵¹ Although, as a recent study has noted, the various ceremonies and parades celebrating the advent of the Republic in 1912 comprised mainly male participants,⁵² a number of girls' schools also took part. One such "lantern parade" (*tideng hui* 提燈會) in Tianjin in February 1912 saw nearly two hundred students from the Beiyang Women's Normal School and the Beiyang Higher School for Girls (along with its attached primary school) brandishing the new five-barred national flag and singing patriotic songs as they marched to the Governor's yamen.⁵³ Female students were not immune

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 131. This was despite official regulations forbidding female students from attending exhibitions and selling handicrafts. Liao Xiuzhen, pp. 237-238.

⁵¹ Thus in 1910 Beijing girls' schools organized the Chinese Female Citizens' Society for Prohibiting Opium 中國國民婦女禁煙會 [*Zhongguo guomin funü jinyan hui*]. Ibid. p. 132. See also *Dagong bao*, 23 Feb. 1911, *ben'an*; 25 Feb. 1911, *ben'an*; 7 April 1911, *shishi*. They also organized an association to campaign against cigarette smoking (*Dagong bao*, 28 November 1910, *ben'an*), a habit indulged in by female students themselves. In 1907 the Board of Education had forbidden school students to smoke (*Dagong bao*, 5 February 1907, *shishi*); citing Japanese practice, the Board of Education referred to a 'patriotic concern with citizens' health', thereby signaling a novel aspect of state discourse at this time which linked national strength with the state's duty to protect the health of ordinary folk.

⁵² H. Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 23-24.

⁵³ *Dagong bao*, 26 February 1912, *ben'an*. It should also be noted that despite official proscriptions during the last years of the Qing against female student involvement in politics, women were being encouraged to involve themselves in national affairs. Thus a newspaper piece in 1907 addressed to "women's circles" (*nüjie*), exhorted them to help redeem the Jiangsu-Zhejiang railway concession granted to foreign interests. "Jing'gao nüjie yijianshu" 敬告女界意見書 [Letter of Exhortation to Women's Circles], *Dagong bao*, 2 December 1907, *laigao*. The term *nüjie* was used again in regulations for the Guizhou Women's Patriotic Association in 1910, which called on all members of "women's circles" (except prostitutes) to join. *Dagong bao*, 2 September 1910, *zhuanjian*. A recent study has noted that only rarely did reporters in the early Republic register the presence of groups of women (mainly female students) as representatives of "women's circles" (*nüjie*). H. Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen*, p. 121.

either from the “*xuechao* 學潮” the waves of protests and strikes that affected modern schools during the last years of the Qing as students expressed dissatisfaction with (amongst other things) school conditions and the quality of teaching. Thus students from the Baoding Girls’ School who attended the graduation field exercises of the Baoding Military School in 1909 unchaperoned went on strike after being reprimanded by their principal while in Hangzhou students at a girls’ school expressed their anger at not receiving high enough grades by refusing to leave their seats and receive their diplomas from the examining official during graduation ceremonies.⁵⁴

It is clear that by the end of the Qing, after more than a decade after the first Chinese-run schools for girls had opened, there was no firm consensus over the rationale and benefits of women’s education. While much attention has been paid by historians to the rhetoric of anti-Qing revolutionaries and moderate reformers demanding equal educational rights for women—exhorting women to become more involved with political affairs and to strive for economic independence, and highlighting women’s education as a crucial panacea for national survival—it should also be recognized that many educators, writers and commentators in the periodical press (including educational and women’s journals) also insisted on a strictly separate and limited curriculum for girls on the basis of innate gender differences, assumed that female students should primarily be trained as efficient household managers, and frequently expressed the fear that women’s education had the potential to undermine the gender and family order.

Conservative Discourse on Women’s Education in the Early Republic

During the early years of the Republic journal articles promoted new and exciting images for women, welcoming the potential opportunities that lay before them to enlarge their social roles. The first issue of *Funü shibao* 婦女時報 [The Ladies’ Times], for example, admiringly pointed to the US, where women were working in library management, journalism, nursing,

⁵⁴ M. Burton, *The Education of Women in China*, p. 189. In early 1911, also, students from Beijing Women’s Normal School went on strike in protest against the “unfair” treatment of trainee teachers by the principal. Weikun Cheng, “Going Public Through Education”, p. 129.

accountancy and as insurance company representatives,⁵⁵ while another article in 1912 exuded confidence that once women were granted political rights in China they would be able to enter all the professions in education, medicine, industry and journalism.⁵⁶ Women's journals such as *Funü shibao*, *Funü zazhi* and *Nüzi shijie* 女子世界 (Women's World) frequently referred enthusiastically to a new world trend of active women driving trains, flying planes and engaging in competitive sports (with the exploits of the American aviatrix, Katherine Stinson, who toured China and Japan in 1917, and the French athlete, Marie Marvingt, who climbed mountains and flew in air balloons, being especially highlighted).⁵⁷

At the same time, however, this positive discourse was paralleled by an ongoing conservative disquiet (reinforced in the wake of the 1911 Revolution) about the potentially subversive effects of women's education and what might happen if women were given too much freedom. At a time when news stories reported on the activities of female bandits in Heilongjiang province,⁵⁸ the presence of female assassination squads (*nüzi ansha tuan* 女

⁵⁵ Wang Jieliang 汪傑樑, "Meiguo nüzi zhi zhiye" 美國女子之職業 [American Women's Professions], *Funü shibao* 婦女時報 [Ladies' Times], no. 1 (1911), pp. 38-41. Typically, however, the author rationalized women's increasing social roles on the basis of conventional gender assumptions. Thus he noted that women would be better qualified to become insurance company representatives because they were more familiar with household property and objects, while women working as shop salespersons would be useful because they could "attract" customers.

⁵⁶ Chong, "Nüquan yu guojia zhi guanxi" (On the Relationship between Women's Rights and the State), *Shenzhou nübao*, no. 1 (1912), *lunshuo*, p. 12.

⁵⁷ See, for example, "Shijie nüzi zhi xin yicai" 世界女子新異彩 [The Extraordinary Splendour of Women in the World], *Funü shibao*, no. 9 (February 1913), pp. 5-8; "Weixian zhi xinfu" 危險之新婦 [The Bride of Danger], *Nüzi Shijie* 女子世界 [Women's World], no. 3 (March 1915), *yizhu*, pp. 1-10; *Funü zazhi*, 3: 3 (March 1917), *yuxing*, p. 20. Yet some Chinese educators at the same time insisted that girls, because of their different mentality (*xinli*), lacked daring, fortitude and boldness and should therefore not be encouraged to participate in overtly vigorous exercises when being taught physical education. Cai Wensen 蔡文森, "Ticao jiaoshou zhi gezhong wenti" 體操教授之各種問題 [Various Problems in the Teaching of Physical Education], *Jiaoyu zazhi*, 2: 9 (1910), *jiaoshou guanli*, pp. 166-122; and "Xuanze ticao youxi jiaocai zhi fangzhen" 選擇體操遊戲教材之方針 [The Way Forward in the Selection of Physical Exercises and Activities], *Jiaoyu zazhi*, 2: 10 (1911), *Jiaoshou guanli*, pp. 123-125.

⁵⁸ *Beijing nübao*, no. 581 (16 April 1907), *shishi yaowen*; no. 592 (27 April 1907), *Nüjie xinwen*; no. 593 (28 April 1907), *nüjie xinwen*.

子暗殺團) in Beijing and Shanghai,⁵⁹ and the “unseemly” conduct of suffragettes demanding equal political rights at a meeting of the National Assembly in Nanjing in early 1912 when they accosted assembly representatives, broke windows and kicked guards to the ground,⁶⁰ observers expressed alarm at the growing visibility and independence of female students. One bewailed the fact that in Guangzhou the loosening of morals had led to boys and girls walking around together in public (hand in hand!), a phenomenon that could only usher in sexual anarchy,⁶¹ while another complained (again referring to Guangzhou) that hardly a day passed without young girls (especially students) disporting themselves publicly in “outrageous” dress styles such as scarlet stockings and trousers that did not go below the knees.⁶² Other fashions amongst female students condemned by women’s journals as frivolous exhibitionism included the wearing of gold-rimmed spectacles (even when the person was not short-sighted) and high-heeled leather shoes.⁶³ For some, moreover, such exhibitionism posed a threat both to the national economy and the country’s reproductive future. Thus the craze for western-style clothes was perceived as a danger to the indigenous textile industry, with one newspaper commenting in 1912 that:

Western clothes have become fashionable, and there are none among the so-called enlightened girl students who do not love Western products, to the extent that almost everything they wear from head to foot is a western product.....⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *Shen bao* 申報(Shanghai), 2 June 1913. There were also reports of female thieves in Guangdong armed with guns. *Shen bao*, 16 January 1913.

⁶⁰ “Lun nūzi yaoqiu canzheng quan zhi guaixiang”論女子要求參政權之怪象[On the Odd Phenomenon of Women Demanding Political Rights], *Dagong bao*, 30 March 1912.

⁶¹ “Zhongguo nannü lifang da chi zhi keju”中國男女禮防大弛之可懼[The Relaxation of Street Etiquette amongst Chinese Men and Women Is to Be Dreaded], *Dagong bao*, 18 May 1913.

⁶² *Dagong bao*, 15 June 1913, *Guangdong*. Contemporary western observers also remarked on the uninhibited behavior of the young (especially girls) in the aftermath of the Revolution. J. Rodes, *Scenes de la vie revolutionnaire en Chine 1911-1914* (Paris: Plon Nourrit, 1917), pp. 66-67.

⁶³ Piao Ping 飄萍, “Lixiang zhi nūxuesheng”理想之女學生[The Ideal Female Student], *Funü zazhi*, 1:3 (March 1915), pp. 1-5.

⁶⁴ Cited in L. Li, *China’s Silk Trade: Traditional Industry in a Modern World*.

At the same time, a supervisor at a Shanghai women's normal school in 1915 criticized the students' vain quest for beauty by wearing tight-fitting undergarments that flattened the breasts (*shu ru* 束乳); such restrictions on natural development, the supervisor noted, would impair their reproductive role and ultimately lead to the weakening of the race.⁶⁵

This criticism of the "irresponsible" exhibitionism of female students formed part of a wider conservative attempt during the early years of the Republic to regain the initiative in defining the purposes of women's education and women's role in society. Despite the efforts of a women's suffrage campaign in 1912, the new republican constitution did not grant women the vote, and by 1914 women were forbidden from joining political associations.⁶⁶ Official regulations in 1914 and 1917 sought to encourage traditional virtues amongst women by reviving the Ming-Qing system of commending noteworthy chaste and filial behavior. Secondary schooling for girls, sanctioned by the new republican system of 1912, was aimed at inculcating the ideal "women's virtues" of chastity, purity and gentleness in the minds of its charges and the importance of domestic science in the curriculum was reemphasized. At the same time, educational and women's

1842-1937 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 121-122.

⁶⁵ Shen Weizhen 沈維楨, "Lun xiao banbi yu nūzi tiyu" 論小半臂與女子體育 [On Sleeveless Undergarments and Girls' Physical Education], *Funü zazhi*, 1: 1 (January 1915), pp. 1-2. See also Lin Shuhua 林樹華, "Duiyu nūjie shenti canhui gaige lun" 對於女界身體殘毀之改革論 [On Eliminating the Damage Done to Women's Physical Health], *Funü zazhi*, 1: 12 (December 1915), pp. 4-6; and Xu Shiheng 徐世衡, "Jinhou funü yingyou de jingshen" 今後婦女應有的精神 [The Required Outlook for Women in the Future], *Funü zazhi*, 6: 8 (August 1920), pp. 12-18. As late as 1930 one school reader for girls was still condemning both the practice of footbinding and wearing tight undergarments to flatten the breasts. Zou Liufang 周柳方 and Mao Zhongying 茅仲英 (comps.), *Funü duben* 婦女讀本 [School Reader for Girls] (Wuxi: Jiangsu shengli jiaoyu xueyuan, 1930), 2: 23-24. Intriguingly, the reader also advised girls to cut their hair short, despite the fact that young women with "bobbed" hair had been viciously attacked in the wake of the 1927 "White Terror" when short hair amongst women was associated with political radicalism and the subversion of the "natural" gender order. Even before 1927, however, girls who cut their hair short were sometimes expelled from school. *Funü zazhi*, 6: 8 (August 1920), *changshi*, pp. 1-6.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the women's suffrage campaign in the early Republic, see Wang Jiajian 王家儉, "Minchu de nūzi canzheng yundong" 民初的女子參政運動 [The Women's Suffrage Movement in the Early Republic], in Li Youning and Zhang Yufa (eds.), *Zhongguo funüshi lunwenji*, 2: 577-608.

journals defined women's primary role as an efficient household manager whose knowledge of hygiene, budgeting, dietary requirements and child psychology, as well as skill in interpersonal relations, would ensure family harmony and prosperity.⁶⁷ School textbook readers in the early republican period likewise continued to stress the importance of a respectful and filial attitude amongst girls, as well as reinforcing the notion of separate spheres. Thus while one reader (first published in 1914 and reprinted eight times by 1921) portrayed a united family (with the father writing letters, mother doing accounts, and the son and daughter studying together), other lessons depicted the son helping his father in the fields and the daughter diligently cleaning and dusting in the home.⁶⁸

As during the last years of the Qing, however, the behavior and attitude of female students continued to disappoint and outrage commentators and educators throughout the early years of the Republic. Writers complained that girls sought education merely for status and image, and that they indulged in extravagance and showiness' (*shechi huali* 奢侈華麗) instead of being seriously committed to the learning of domestic skills.⁶⁹ Female students, one writer lamented, were behaving as if they had just been

⁶⁷ P. Bailey, "Active Citizen or Efficient Housewife? The Debate Over Women's Education in Early Twentieth Century China," pp. 228-230.

⁶⁸ *Nüzi guowen jiaoke shu* 女子國文教科書 [Chinese Readers for Girls' Lower Primary Schools] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1914-1916), vol. 1: Lessons 27, 45; vol. 2: Lessons 46, 47, 52. The efficient household manager, however, was very different from the traditional "sequestered maid" of the inner chambers. Thus lessons portray a daughter greeting and seeing off guests at the entrance to the house, as well as a serious-minded girl reproaching her neighbour for tolerating an untidy and unhygienic household. *Ibid.*, vol. 3: Lesson 10; vol. 4: Lesson 28. In line with the early republican discourse castigating the arrogance and extravagance of female students, school readers advised girls not to throw away old clothes in a fruitless quest to acquire new ones and warned them not to be overbearing with maidservants. *Ibid.*, vol. 5: Lessons 5, 9, 31.

⁶⁹ De Zheng 德徵, "Lun Zhongguo nüzi shenghuo zhi zhuangkuang" 論中國女子生活之狀況 [The situation of Chinese women's lives], *Nüzi zazhi* [Women's Magazine], 1: 1 (November 1915), *shelun*. See also "Nüzi qiuxue wenti" 女子求學問題 [The Question of Women Seeking an Education], *Nüxuesheng zazhi*, no. 3 (1912), p. 2, which not only criticized female students who disdained studying household affairs, but also insisted that all female heroines of the past as well as female politicians and teachers in the West knew how to run an efficient household.

released from prison, acting with reckless abandon and breaking every convention and taboo; they needed to “regulate” their behavior and be less frivolous on the one hand, and more moderate in their opinions on the other.⁷⁰ One such taboo broken, in the words of one writer, was “same-sex love” (*tongxing zhi aiqing* 同性之愛情)—a practice that female students indulged in primarily out of a ‘perverse’ desire to be unconventional.⁷¹ In general, female students were accused of being irascible, disrespectful, aggressive and egotistical, with one commentator noting that although they might be able to discuss international affairs they were potentially inept household managers.⁷² Such a deficiency threatened the very future of the country.⁷³

Some blamed moral laxity and social anarchy entirely on women who had received a modern education; such an education, one writer insisted, was not meant to usher in a “Paris-style” society or be used as the foundation for women’s rights, but rather to train wise mothers and virtuous wives.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Dangyang Xuqing Nüshi 當陽許清女士, “Jinggao nüxuesheng” 敬告女學生 [A Polite Warning for Female Students], *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1: 7 (July 1915).

⁷¹ Shan Zai 善哉, “Funü tongxing zhi aiqing” 婦女同性之愛情 [Same-sex Love amongst Women], *Funü shibao*, no. 7 (July 1912), pp. 36-38. The other term used was *tongxing zhi lian'ai*.

⁷² Piao Ping, “Lixiang zhi nüxuesheng”, *Funü zazhi*, 1: 3 (March 1915), *lunshuo*, pp. 1-5. The author noted that female students, because they apparently “coveted” Europeanisation (*mu Ouhua*), were becoming more proficient in English than in their native tongue. See also Xia Zhen 遐珍, “Yu zhi zhonggao yu nüxuesheng” 余之忠告於女學生 [My Sincere Advice to Female Students], *Funü zazhi*, 1: 4 (April 1915), *lunshuo*, pp. 4-5. Xia Zhen, a former student herself, warned that the arrogance of female students threatened the very existence of the family. It is interesting to note that journals such as *Funü zazhi* that preached the virtues of diligent domesticity and criticized the attitude and dress of female students were read as teaching materials in some girls’ schools (apparently with little effect!). See the report on a girls’ lower primary school in Sichuan in *Funü zazhi*, 1: 11 (November 1915), *tongxin*, pp. 1-3.

⁷³ “Lun woguo furen buneng zhijia zhi hai” 論我國婦人不能治家之害 [On the Harm of Our Country’s Women Being Unable to Manage the Household], *Nüxuesheng zazhi*, no. 2 (1911), *sheshuo*, pp. 1-3.

⁷⁴ Wang Zhanglu 汪長祿, “Fu de” 婦德 [On Women’s Virtue], *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1: 1 (January 1915). See also Liu Sheng 劉盛, “Zhongguo nüxue shifan lun” 中國女學師範論 [On Women’s Teacher Training in China], *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1: 6 (June 1915), and Li Furu, “Nüjie zhenyan” 女界箴言 [Admonition to Women], *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1: 10 (October 1915). Women’s life-styles and behavior in France were often portrayed as

Significantly, while commentators remarked that female students often resembled prostitutes or “frivolous” fashionable women of the day because of their foreign clothes, short hair and coquettish demeanour,⁷⁵ others noted that influences could work *the other way round*, with prostitutes (in Shanghai) aping the fashion and manners of female students.⁷⁶ (The perceived similarities between female students and prostitutes could have unfortunate consequences. Thus in the provincial capital of Anhui, where a brothel was apparently located near a women’s normal school, female students were frequently apprehended by police as suspected prostitutes.)⁷⁷ Also, in the attempt to “reform” popular culture after 1912, the Republican Education Ministry and provincial authorities often classified fictional and semi-fictional depictions of the lives and “adventures” of female students alongside more overtly pornographic works as the epitome of salacious reading material deserving to be banned. Thus in 1915 the Education

the epitome of extravagance and debauchery. German women were considered more obedient and persevering, and less prone to hanker after status and fame. Zhi Yuan 致遠, “Deyizhi zhi nü” 德意志之女 [German Women], *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1: 7 (July 1915).

⁷⁵ “Zhuangshi” 妝飾 [On Adornment], *Nüxuesheng zazhi*, no. 2 (1911), pp. 110-111; Hu Shengwu 胡繩武 and Cheng Weikun 程爲坤, “Minchu shehui fengshang de yanbian” 民初社會風尚的演變 [The Evolution of Social Customs in the Early Republic], *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 (Modern History Research), 34: 4 (July 1986), pp. 138-139. In 1911 the Board of Education had apparently condemned “seductively made up and dressed” (*ye*) female students. See Lu Feikui 陸費達, “Seyu yu jiaoyu” 色慾與教育 [Sex and Education], *Jiaoyu zazhi*, 3: 9 (1911), *yanlun*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ Shen Shuzhen 沈淑貞, “Hushang yishe jinü xuexiao lun” 滬上擬設妓女學校論 [On the Proposal to Establish a School for Prostitutes in Shanghai], *Funü shibao*, no. 7 (July 1912), pp. 45-46. The article was written in reaction against the proposal. The reputation of girls’ schools would suffer, the author warned, especially as prostitutes tended to imitate the dress of female students in order to appropriate their status. Another commentator noted in 1913 that female students in Shanghai were competing with one another to determine who wore the fanciest clothes, and were even being imitated by prostitutes. “Lun Shanghai nüxuesheng zhi zhuangshi” 論上海女學生之裝束 [On the Dress of Female Students in Shanghai], *ibid.*, no. 11 (October 1911), pp. 11-13.

⁷⁷ “Wansheng gongchang fang’ai nüxue zhi jiaoshe” 皖省公娼妨礙女學之交涉 [Negotiations over a Public Brothel Hindering Women’s Education in Anhui’s Provincial Capital], *Shen bao*, 25 January 1913.

Ministry proscribed a work entitled *Nüxuesheng* 女學生 (Female Student),⁷⁸ in 1919 the Anhui governor warned magistrates of the recent appearance of three “harmful” novels, one of which was entitled *Nüxuesheng zhi baimian guan* 女學生之百面觀 (The Multiple Identities of Female Students),⁷⁹ while a list of novels to be banned drawn up in 1918 by the Education Ministry’s Popular Education Research Association included *Nüxuesheng mimi riji* 女學生秘密日記 (The Secret Diary of a Female Student).⁸⁰

While the unconventional, extravagant and exhibitionist appearance of female students (dressed either like prostitutes or like men)⁸¹ was a target of criticism, their activities also provoked disapproval. In June 1912, for example, the Beiyang Higher Level Girls’ School gave physical education

⁷⁸ *Jiaoyu zhoubao* 教育週報 [Education Weekly], no. 93 (August 1915), *fulu*, p. 47.

⁷⁹ *Anhui jiaoyu yuekan* 安徽教育月刊 [Anhui Education Monthly], no. 14 (1919), *gongwen*, p. 56. The other two were entitled *Seyu shijie* 色慾世界 [The World of Sex] and *Zhongguo jiating heimu* (Hidden Scandals of the Chinese Family).

⁸⁰ *Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan* 中國第二歷史檔案館 [Second Historical Archives of China], *Jiaoyubu* (Ministry of Education): 57-104.

⁸¹ Some feared shorter hair amongst students (as well as the wearing of trousers or long gowns) would blur gender distinctions. “Kan women nüzi bei renjia chixiao” 看我們女子被人家恥笑 [Look at How Our Women are Ridiculed by Everyone], *Dagong bao*, 27 June 1912, *baihua*; “Nüzi jianfa wenti” 女子剪髮問題 [On the Question of Women Cutting Their Hair], *Nüxuesheng Zazhi*, no. 3 (1912). It was even reported that during the 1912-1913 elections women had dressed up as men in order to cast votes for male relatives (*Dagong bao*, 24 January 1913, *zalu*), while the chairperson of the Chinese Women’s Alliance (*Zhongguo nüzi tongmenghui*), Wu Mulan, was specifically criticized by the vice-governor of Hubei for having short hair, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles and dressing in western-style men’s clothes (*Dagong bao*, 30 June 1912, *Hubei*). As early as 1910 the *Beijing nübao* was claiming that “women are imitating men in everything today, in their clothes, hats, shoes, hairstyles, spectacles and cigarette smoking...” Cited in Weikun Cheng, “Going Public Through Education”, p. 128. There was clearly, however, a variety of hairstyles on display. One observer criticized students who wore trousers and had their hair done in long pleats; this made them look like “servants” in his view. “Jielu Shen Youqing xiansheng nüxiao yi tichang gailiang fu yi” 節錄沈友卿先生女校宜提倡改良服議 [Extract from Shen Youqing’s Proposal That Girls’ Schools Should Reform Dress], *Nüxuesheng zazhi*, no. 3 (1912), *lunshuo*, pp. 3-4. Other students apparently wore their hair in buns or coils, or cut their hair in the front according to a variety of fringe styles. “Shanghai funü zhi xin zhuangshi” 上海婦女之新妝束 [New Dress of Shanghai Women], *Funü shibao*, no. 1 (1911), p. 54.

and music displays in front of an audience of over 3,000, during which students sold national savings certificates (*guomin juanfen* 國民卷分); one newspaper reporting on the event noted that some observers considered this undignified and inappropriate behavior.⁸² More alarming to others was the involvement of female students in school strikes and protests during the early years of the Republic. In 1913, for example, students at Beijing Women's Normal School staged protests against the principal for his conservative views of women's education (he apparently believed that women should only have rudimentary literacy and should primarily study embroidery and cooking, and forbade students from reading newspapers).⁸³ At the Second Provincial Women's Normal School in Jinan, Shandong more than sixty students went on strike in 1915 after the principal disciplined them for criticizing the eating arrangements; they marched on the offices of the local police bureau complaining of the principal's "arbitrary" behavior.⁸⁴ Missionary schools were also affected by student protest. Over eighty students went on strike at Shanghai's McTyeire School (Sino-Western Girls' Academy) in 1915 following accusations of unfair treatment by the American principal.⁸⁵

⁸² *Dagong bao*, 18 June 1912, *ben'an*. The fact that such criticism came from "so-called" educated people, the reporter noted, made him weep for China's future. Clearly, there were those who resented women in general becoming more publicly visible. It would seem, for example, that women were becoming more involved in entrepreneurial activities since in January 1914 the Zhejiang provincial assembly issued an order calling on all enterprises and stores managed by women to close within a month because, it was felt, women managing enterprises "damaged customs" (*haifeng*). *Dagong bao*, 17 January 1914, *Zhejiang*.

⁸³ "Beijing nüzi shifan xuexiao zuijin da fengchao wenjian ji" 北京女子師範學校最近大風潮聞見記 [Report on the Recent Big Disturbance at the Beijing Women's Normal School], *Funü shibao*, no. 9 (February 1913), pp. 49-64; no. 10 (May 1913), pp. 58-64; no. 11 (October 1913), pp. 61-67.

⁸⁴ *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1: 11 (November 1915), *tebie jishi*. See also *Shen bao*, 21 November 1915.

⁸⁵ "Zhongxi nüshu zhengbei liangji tuixue zhi yuanyin" 中西女塾正備兩級退學之原因 [The Reasons Why Students from the Main and Preparatory Classes of McTyeire School have withdrawn], *Nüzi Zazhi*, no. 1 (January 1915), *jishi*, pp. 2-3. See also H. Ross, "'Cradle of Female Talent': The McTyeire Home and School for Girls 1892-1937", in D. Bays (ed.), *China and Christianity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 216-217.

During the height of the New Culture movement, female students continued to attract unwelcome publicity. Not only were they extravagant, shameless and unrestrained, in the words of one observer, but they also behaved like “young ruffians” (*eshao* 惡少), giving full rein to rude comments and mocking laughter at the expense of passers-by. They also brazenly travelled alone and were not bashful in “grabbing” seats for themselves in libraries and teahouses.⁸⁶ A reason one writer thought in 1918 that higher education was not suitable for women was because their “unrestrained arrogance” (*aozong* 傲縱) would only become worse.⁸⁷ In 1920 young girls were still being criticized for their pursuit of “false beauty” (which included the wearing of high-heeled shoes and spectacles),⁸⁸ and female students in particular were accused of being “bogus civilized women” (*jia wenming de funü* 假文明的婦女) who simply led lazy and dissolute lives at school.⁸⁹ (The assumption that female students sought an education for a life of leisure had tragic consequences. A student at Beijing Women’s Normal School committed suicide out of shame in May 1917 after a teacher there reportedly—according to an anonymous campus placard—told her and some of her classmates that in recognition of their good schoolwork they could become her husband’s concubines after graduation.)⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ding Fengjia 丁逢甲, “Nüjie zhenyan” 女界箴言 [Admonition to Women], *Funü zazhi*, 4:2 (February 1918), *sheshuo*, pp. 5-6; 4:3 (March 1918), *sheshuo*, pp. 1-4. An earlier article in 1915 had expressed alarm at the prospect of groups of young girls wandering about amusing themselves on their day off school. Efforts should be made, it was advised, to organize educational excursions or provide opportunities for “practice housework”. Lu Chouqian 盧壽錢, “Nüxuesheng yu xingqiri” 女學生與星期日 [Female Students and Sundays], *Zhonghua funüjie*, 1:2 (February 1915).

⁸⁷ Wang Zhuomin 王卓民, “Lun woguo daxue shang buyi nan’nü tongxiao” 論吾國大學尚不宜男女同校 [It Is Still Inappropriate in Our Country for Girls to Study with Boys at University], *Funü zazhi*, 4:5 (May 1918), *sheshuo*, pp. 1-8.

⁸⁸ Fu Yanzhang 傅彥長, “Ribende funü” 日本的婦女 [Japanese Women], *Xin funü* 新婦女 [The New Woman], 1:5 (March 1920), pp. 39-41. The author contrasted Chinese girls unfavourably with their Japanese counterparts.

⁸⁹ Miao Cheng Shuyi 繆程淑儀, “He wei shengli de funü? he wei fenli de funü?” 何謂生利的婦女？何謂分利的婦女？ [What Do We Mean by Productive and Consuming women?], *Funü zazhi*, 6:6 (June 1920), *changshi*, pp. 1-5.

⁹⁰ “Beijing nü shifan xuesheng zijin zhi neirong” 北京女師範學生自盡之內容 [The Background to the Suicide of a Female Student from Beijing Women’s Normal School], *Shen bao*, 9 May 1919. Other explanations for her death were that she had

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of a conservative (and critical) discourse on women's education and the female student during the late Qing and early Republic raises a number of issues that perhaps have been overlooked as a result of the attention paid to the patriotic involvement of female students in the May Fourth movement and the beginnings of organized women's movements during the early 1920s after the founding of the CCP and the revitalisation of the Guomindang. Such a discourse clearly reveals that young women responded to new educational opportunities after 1900 in a variety of different ways. They became more assertive and expressed their individuality in a bewildering array of dress and hair styles; others sought to expand their public roles by participating in exhibitions, displays and national relief campaigns.⁹¹ At the same time, the conservative attempt in the early Republic to regain the initiative in defining the purpose of women's education and the constant refrain in educational and women's journals that female students were abusing the privilege of education indicate that many of them contested both the *raison d'être* of women's education emphasized by officials and educators—the cultivation of diligent, compliant and frugal household managers—and prescribed notions of female behavior.

A fascinating article written by a female student, Xie Wanying 謝婉瑩, in September 1919 indicated that only when her colleagues behaved more moderately and responsibly could they meet society's approval.⁹² Noting that the response to the new phenomenon of the female student since the turn of the century had taken three forms, Xie Wanying claimed that at first

been prescribed the wrong medicine by a doctor and that she had told friends she intended to commit suicide on the day of her arranged marriage.

⁹¹ Female students might also behave in ways that confirmed stereotypes of the highly strung and emotional female. A thirty-year old student from a Shanghai women's school committed suicide on the death of her husband in 1915 (*Zhonghua funüjie*, 1:3, 5 March 1915), while in 1924 a middle school graduate in Tianjin swallowed poison when her fiancé broke off their engagement. *Tianjin funü ribao* 天津婦女日報 (Tianjin Women's Daily), 11 March 1924.

⁹² Xie Wanying 謝婉瑩, "Pohuai yu jianshe shidai de nüxuesheng" 破壞與建設時代的女學生 [Female Students at a Time of Disruption and Construction], *Chen bao* 晨報 [Morning Post], 4 September 1919.

the female student had been seen as the hallmark of civilization, but then had quickly taken on a negative connotation as girls' schools were perceived as "places to cultivate female vice" (*nüzi zui'e zaocheng suo* 女子罪惡造成所). Recently, however, according to Xie Wanying, female students were respected again because they were less undisciplined and disruptive and had "regulated" their behavior so that "superficial showiness" had been replaced by "firm steadfastness". Significantly, Xie advised her colleagues in the future not to be too arrogant and to dress moderately at all times (wristwatches should be their only adornment!). They were to avoid aiming too high and saying things that offended others or that were not "compatible" with national conditions. Female students must henceforth concentrate on acquiring knowledge of household hygiene and other female vocations; instead of visiting "riotous and noisy places of entertainment" (such as theatres) they should attend more sober occasions such as lectures and museum exhibitions, and at all times should avoid mixing individually or in groups with males.⁹³ Xie's article provides an intriguing glimpse into how female students behaved during the early years of the Republic and suggests that the female students who played a part in the May Fourth demonstrations and student organizations may have been very different (or at least were perceived to be different) from the assertive, anarchic, unconventional and outgoing female student of a few years earlier (and needed to be in order to be accepted by their male counterparts).

Finally, this conservative discourse on women's education and the female student in the early twentieth century amongst officials, educational administrators and theorists, school principals and teachers (many of whom contributed to the educational and women's journals that have been the focus of this article), albeit overshadowed in the historical literature by a simultaneous and more radical discourse on women's rights and roles in society during the New Culture movement, tells us something about the origins of subsequent tensions, ambivalences and paradoxes in gender discourse. Thus the preoccupation with the moral attributes of the "modern woman" in the 1920s and 1930s amongst reformist intellectuals anxious "to reclaim their role as enlightened moral guardians and therefore leading

⁹³ Female students, Xie advised, also need to be very selective in their reading material, thereby avoiding all harmful literature. She herself "confessed" to having been tempted to read *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [Journey to the West] as a break from studying!

advisers for the nation”⁹⁴ at a time when they felt increasingly marginalised, was foreshadowed in the earlier conservative attempt in the 1910s to regain the initiative in determining the direction of women’s education and prescribing the appropriate behavior of the modern educated woman. Also, the contradictory social expectations of women during the Nanjing decade, when “education, physical fitness and a domestic inclination were alike expected of them”,⁹⁵ echoed the earlier tension in a rationale for women’s education that called for the training of both compliant household managers and physically active citizens. At the same time, the subordinate role of women within the early CCP, the suspicion of politically radical and assertive women after 1927, the importance attached to the “socialist housewife” in the mid-1950s, renewed discussion of “natural” female attributes and “proper” feminine behavior in the 1980s (in reaction against the “androgynisation” of the Cultural Revolution period), and the contemporary suspicion of the independent career woman all represent continuity with the ideas, assumptions and attitudes displayed during the early twentieth century project on women’s education.

⁹⁴ L. Edwards, “Policing the Modern Woman in Republican China”, *Modern China*, 26:2 (April 2000), pp. 115-116.

⁹⁵ A. Finnane, “What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem”, in A. Finnane and A. McClaren (eds.), *Dress, Sex and Text in Chinese Culture* (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999), p. 19.